

They walked up and down the platform—a curious couple. Philip very tall and thin in a buttoned frock coat and top hat; Maisie very short and fat in a blue sailor suit and a wide straw hat with a wreath round it. She held her brother's arm and half danced and gazed up at him with big eyes of admiration. 'Oh Pip! you do look fine. You look simply ripping. Much the handsomest man here. Ah! I wish you always wore a frock coat. And that blue tie. It makes your eyes all black.' He gave her arm a squeeze and laughed at her. 'Don't, kid—you're making me blush. People'll think we're a newly married couple.' 'Pip!' Maisie shrieked with joy. 'Don't be so absurd. I haven't even got my hair *tied back*. And look at my skirt! Very short. I wish you could make Mum lengthen my skirts. She won't realise I'm fourteen. It's awful to wear these short things.' 'Well you are a Miss Blinge. If you could see your knees you wouldn't want to wear any skirt at all.' 'What do you mean? My knees are different to other people's are they?' 'Aren't they. You look at most girls—they're pigeon-kneed. Knees turn in like this.' He stopped and showed her. 'A fright. You've got knees like a little boy statue.' 'Have I?' said Maisie, very pleased. 'Well, fancy! I never knew.'

The station platform was crowded with people waiting for the boat train to come in. They stood together in little groups, the women talking with a great deal of animation, the men silent and bored-looking. In and out among them trundled the porters. 'By your leave. By your leave. *If you please*.' The clarion of voices that seemed to resolve curiously, if you listened, into one insistent strident voice was broken by the sound of bells and whistles and the shuffling blaring noise of the trains. White smoke floated up from somewhere and hung below the station roof like misty fires dissolving, came again in swaying wreaths. 'Wonderfully beautiful' thought Philip, 'and so full of life.' He pointed it out to Maisie. 'Look girly, look at that smoke. [That is how the high notes on a fiddle played pianissimo ought to sound]' But Maisie was tortured with impatience. 'What's the time, Philip, what's the time? Why doesn't that stupid old train come in? I'll never come and wait for anybody again—as long as I live, never.' 'It won't be long now.' And he said, to distract her, 'Bet you won't know Maata again!' 'Do you mean I'll have forgotten what she looks like? You can't mean that!' 'Yes I do. It's five years since you saw her. If you jump back five times it makes you only nine.' They stood still together, and he put his hand on her soft little shoulder and rubbed his fingers against her neck and tiny ear. 'You can't think what a sweet* you were then, kid.' 'Tell me,' she said, basking like a kitten in his warm love. 'Well, you were only about up to your own shoulder, and your hair